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ABSTRACT

This practicum reports on the development of a support network for parents (n=34) of students with learning disabilities at a private rural elementary school. The program focuses on providing essential information to parents and increasing their involvement within the school setting. The program involved: (1) monthly meetings of parents; (2) creative projects involving parents and children working together; and (3) development of improved communication channels among students, parents, teachers, and the school. Success of the program was measured by comparisons before and after program implementation utilizing a School Involvement Parent Questionnaire, school records, and a Background Assessment instrument. A 30 percent increase in average scores was measured on the Background Assessment. A 15 percent increase in parental volunteers in the classrooms and a 12 percent increase in parental attendance at school-wide functions were also exhibited. A 25 percent increase in positive responses on the parent involvement questionnaire indicated increased parental engagement in creative projects. Extensive appendices include the measures developed for the study, results of telephone polls, specific results for each question on the questionnaire, letters and materials used to develop the program, and results of the Background Assessment. (DB)

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ED 370 338

IMPLEMENTING A SUPPORT PROGRAM FOR PARENTS OF LEARNING DISABLED STUDENTS IN A RURAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

by

Charlda Carroll Sizemore

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A Practicum Report

submitted to the Faculty of the Center for Advancement of Education of Nova University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science

The abstract of this report may be placed in a National Database System for reference.

January/1994

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Abstract

Implementing A Support Program for Parents of Learning Disabled Students in a Rural Elementary School.
Sizemore, Charlda C., 1993: Practicum Report, Nova University,
The Center for the Advancement of Education.
Descriptors:Specific Learning Disabilities/ Support Groups/ Parents/ Elementary School/ Parent Involvement/ Counseling Techniques/ Problem Solving/ Analysis/ Evaluating

Parents of learning disabled students did not have a support network in operation at the rural elementary school. A new program was designed to provide essential information to parents and increase involvement of the parents within the school setting. The parent support program fostered communication between learning disabled students, parents, teachers, and the school through engagement in creative projects emphasizing critical thinking skills of organizing information and problem solving.

Success of the program was measured by pre and post comparisons utilizing a School Involvement Parent Questionnaire, school records, and a writer-created Background Assessment. A thirty percent increase in average scores was measured on the Background Assessment. A fifteen percent increase in parental volunteers in the classrooms and a twelve percent increase in parental attendance at school-wide functions were shown by examination of school records. A twenty-five percent increase in positive responses indicating engagement in creative projects was demonstrated by administering the School Involvement Parent Questionnaire to the parents.

Authorship Statement

I hereby testify that this paper and the work it reports are entirely my own. When it has been necessary to draw from the work of others, published or unpublished, I have acknowledged such work in accordance with accepted scholarly and editorial practices. I give this testimony freely, out of respect for the scholarship of others professionals in the field and in the hope that my own work, presented here, will earn similar respect.

Charlda Carroll Sizemore

Charlda Carroll Sizemore

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Practicum Title Implementing A Support Program for Parents of Learning Disabled Students in a Rural ~~Elementary School~~

Student's Name Charlda Carroll Sizemore

Program Site Glades Day School Date January 3, 1994

Observer's Name Sharon K. Baumgartner -- Sharon K Baumgartner
(please print----------sign)

Observer's position English teacher/~~English Dept~~ Chairman Phone # 407-924-2498 (Home) 407-996-6769 (Work)

Observer's comment on impact of the project (handwritten):

I have attended several of Mrs. Charlda Sizemore's parent/teacher support programs where she has implemented the use of videos, a guest speaker (Dr. Jacques P. Jammes), hands-on activities, and hand-outs that helped teachers and parents to better understand the child with a specific learning disability. Each program was well attended, informative, and has opened communication and a camaraderie between the specialists, the parents, and teachers of these special children.

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CHAPTER I

Purpose

A private rural elementary school served as the site for the project. The community in which the elementary school was located was multiethnic with a racial composition of approximately 45 percent Caucasian, 35 percent Black, 10 percent Hispanic, 10 percent Arab and Other. The economic base of the community was agriculture. Corn, sugarcane, and vegetables were the major crops.

The population of the community was approximately fifteen thousand year round residents with an additional five to ten thousand migrant workers residing in the community for part of the year. In the last two years, a move towards mechanical harvesters had drastically reduced the number of migrant residents.

The rural school was privately owned and contained grades from kindergarten to twelfth grade. The school was organized twenty-eight years ago by parents. A seven member Board of Directors was elected by the parents to serve as the policy-making body. The Headmaster and the

Elementary School Principal were the chief administrators and were responsible for the daily operations of the school. The school was fully accredited by the Florida Council of Independent Schools. Ninety percent of the graduating seniors attended colleges and universities.

The elementary school was located in a separate building adjacent to the secondary school. The population of the elementary school was 75 percent Caucasian, 15 percent Hispanic, 5 percent Black, 5 percent Arab and Other. The elementary curriculum was similar to the curriculum utilized by the county. The textbooks adopted for use in the private school included the MacMillan Series, Harcourt, Brace, and Jovanovich, and Heath. Extracurricular activities offered to students in the elementary school were the following: (1) band (2) glee club (3) dance (4) sports, and (5) computer club.

The Specific Learning Disabilities program had been established as a new program to the elementary school. The Specific Learning Disabilities program was implemented in the fall and had been in operation for only one year. A resource room had been established as the model of service delivery.

The writer was a resource teacher for learning disabled students attending the rural elementary school. The writer provided instruction for the seventeen students diagnosed with learning disabilities through independent evaluation. The students were pulled from mainstream classrooms and attended the resource room for supplemental instruction for sixty minutes each day. The writer was responsible for developing and implementing individualized instructional programs for the seventeen students. The writer was also responsible for liaison activities with the parents.

The parents of the learning disabled students stemmed from a variety of social and economic conditions. Eleven of the seventeen families were associated economically with agriculture. The remaining six families owned and operated commercial businesses or were professional workers.

The response from parents to the new Specific Learning Disabilities Program established at the elementary school had been positive. However, although parents initially expressed a desire to become involved with the educational process of the students, few parents had actually volunteered in the classrooms.

The writer had observed a high level of frustration and misunderstanding concerning the nature and characteristics of specific learning disabilities. As parents had been contacted for participation in school events and activities, the responses were often reluctant. Many questions were frequently posed concerning the functioning levels of the learning disabled students.

There appeared to be a cloud of misunderstanding developing and a lack of communication among the parents and teachers. Parents had expressed the need for more professional information. Parents also expressed the desire for more interaction with other parents of similar circumstance. This lack of communication hindered quality interaction between students, parents, and teachers.

Parents and teachers of students with learning disabilities faced unique challenges. The academic discrepancies, cognitive difficulties, and social/emotional problems exhibited by the students pointed to the need for a system of support based upon shared common concerns.

The new Specific Learning Disabilities Program had

been implemented for seventeen students needing exceptional student educational services at the rural elementary school. The writer, serving as teacher and coordinator of the new program, conducted a telephone poll. The telephone poll (Appendix A:41) was conducted at the completion of one year of operation of the program in order to elicit parental opinions, teacher opinions, and assess future needs of the new program.

The parents and teachers of the learning disabled students voiced definite positive support for the continuation of the new Specific Learning Disabilities Program at the school (Appendix B:43). The parents expressed a desire for more information concerning the general field of Specific Learning Disabilities, a need for interaction with other parents, and a willingness to participate in support group meetings if initiated (Appendix C:45).

The telephone poll (Appendix A:41) pointed to the need for establishing a support group in order to increase the knowledge base and interaction among parents, children and teachers at the elementary school.

A writer-created Background Assessment (Appendix D:47) was developed and administered to thirty-four

parents of learning disabled students during the fall of 1992. The Background Assessment contained ten pertinent informational questions regarding the legal aspects, nature, needs and characteristics of learning disabled students. Ten points were allotted for each correct answer with a possible perfect score of 100 points.

The results (Appendix E:50) showed that an average score of 30 points was obtained for the parents of learning disabled students. The knowledge base of the parents concerning the laws, diagnosis/treatment, and educational programming for learning disabled students was shown to be extremely weak with ten points recorded for the area of knowledge concerning public laws.

Increasing the knowledge base of the parents might greatly enhance the positive effects of the educational program provided to the students at the rural elementaty school. At least a ten percent average gain in scores would be expected if parents were systemically exposed to informational sessions.

A School Involvement Parent Questionnaire (Appendix F:52) was mailed to parents of students attending the elementary school. The Questionnaire (Appendix F:52) asked parents to provide information regarding home

activities or projects completed with their children, attendance to school functions, and volunteer activities within the individual classrooms.

Responses of parents of learning disabled students were expected to be similar to parents of students not enrolled in special learning disabilities programs. One hundred sixty-two responses were returned by the parents with thirty-four responses returned by the parents of learning disabled students (Appendix G:54).

Question Two of the School Involvement Parent Questionnaire (Appendix F:52) specifically addressed attendance of parents at the six most important school-wide functions sponsored by the elementary school. Attendance of parents at the events was considered a good indicator of school support. Children usually responded positively to parental attendance at such school-wide functions as talent shows and Halloween programs.

The results (Appendix G:54) of parents of students not enrolled in the Specific Learning Disabled Program showed a 60 percent attendance rate. The results (Appendix G:54) of parents of learning disabled student showed a 51 percent attendance rate. A comparison of attendance rates at school-wide functions showed a nine

percent discrepancy (Appendix H:56). Parents of learning disabled students were not attending important school-wide functions as frequently as other parents of students attending the school. The parents of learning disabled students were nine percent less likely to attend important school-wide events.

Question Five of the School Involvement Parent Questionnaire (Appendix F:52) specifically addressed volunteer efforts in the classroom. Volunteering in the classrooms might provide valuable information to parents concerning the learning styles of students. Instructional strategies demonstrated in the classroom might possibly be adapted or modified for home use. Volunteering in the classroom was considered a strong indicator of support.

The results (Appendix I:58) showed that a twelve percent volunteer rate had been demonstrated by parents of students not enrolled in the Specific Learning Disabilities Program; and, a three percent volunteer rate had been demonstrated by parents of learning disabled students. A comparison of rates indicated a nine percent discrepancy. Only one parent of learning disabled students was presently volunteering in the classroom.

Question eight of the School Involvement Parent

Questionnaire (Appendix F:52) assessed the number of parents engaged in creative projects with their children. Engaging in creative projects was considered as an excellent vehicle for promoting critical thinking skills and stimulating positive interaction by teachers using the curricula of the county. Improving the use of leisure time to include joint creative projects might enhance communication among parents, children and the school.

The results (Appendix J:60) showed that 52 percent of parents of students not enrolled in the Specific Learning Disabilities Program engaged in joint creative projects. Only 41 percents of the parents of learning disabled students engaged in creative projects with their children. The responses indicated an 11 percent discrepancy (Appendix H:56). It was expected that responses of the parents would be similar. Parents of learning disabled students were not engaging in joint creative projects as frequently as other parents attending the school.

The problem to be addressed was the current lack of support provided to parents of students with learning disabilities enrolled at the rural elementary school. If

the support program were offered to the parents, it would be expected that the discrepancies of 10 percent in average scores on the Background Assessment and 11 percent on the School Involvement Parent Questionnaire would be eliminated. The average scores would be expected to more closely resemble the scores of parents of students not enrolled in the Specific Learning Disabilities Program.

There was a need to develop a new support program to provide essential and pertinent information to parents, and foster communication among teachers, parents, and children at the school. Support for the development of the new program was provided by the building administrator (Appendix L:64).

The purpose of the project was to provide a support program primarily to parents of learning disabled students attending a rural elementary school. The program was designed to provide essential information about learning disabilities to parents and was expected to increase involvement of parents within the school setting. The program emphasized fostering communication among learning disabled students, parents, teachers and the school through engagement in creative projects.

The target group (Appendix M:66) participating in the program was composed of thirty-four parents of learning disabled students. The target group consisted primarily of parents engaged in agricultural occupations. The writer was the coordinating teacher and liaison to the parents of the learning disabled students.

Measurement instruments utilized to determine success of the project included a School Involvement Parent Questionnaire, a Background Assessment, school records, and classroom records. The following objectives were projected:

1 - After sixteen weeks of participation in the parent support program, the target group would increase average scores by at least an average of ten percent between pre and post administrations of the Background Assessment.

2 - After sixteen weeks of participating in the parent support program, the target group would increase attendance by nine percent at school-wide functions as evidenced by school records.

3 - After sixteen weeks of participating in the parent support program, the target group would

increase by nine percent the number of parents volunteering in the classroom as evidenced by classroom records.

4 - After sixteen weeks of participating in the parent support program, the target group would increase by eleven percent the positive responses to Question Eight of the School Involvement Parent Questionnaire indicating engagement in creative projects with child involving critical thinking skills and problem solving.

CHAPTER II

Research and Solution Strategy

The National Information Center for Handicapped Children and Youth in Washingston D.C. (1985) has published recommendations for parents of learning disabled children. The document encouraged parents to find a support group. The recommendations indicated that social and community support could reduce the stress experienced by family members. It was also recommended that parents not only need emotional support but also information about the condition, services available, and what could be done to help the children reach full potential.

American Issues Project, Inc.(1991) documented the effect of parent involvement on education. Parents tended to make good decisions concerning the education of their children when the parents had been provided good information. The project focused on a number of schools that dramatically reversed downward trends in test scores

and parent/student dissatisfactions. The project stressed innovative teacher techniques and parent involvement activities. Schools in Kentucky and East Harlem were cited as examples of outstanding schools combining active learning with parent involvement. Both schools cite home visitations by teachers as an important vehicle for fostering parent teacher understanding and cooperation.

The holistic approach in the Head Start Program in Alachua County (Head Start, 1992) brought parents into the program and provided for full family services such as medical care. The Head Start program purported that if the family discovered that staff cared and provided additional benefits, the parents subsequently became more involved. The staff also conducted door to door visitations of parents in an effort to encourage involvement.

Blai (1985) emphasized that people needed opportunities to learn how to change. Reform had often been more talked about than practiced. A school based management program would include parents on the management board. Blai (1985) concluded that schools work well when communities and families were informed.

When parents were trusted and incorporated in the teaching process, the parents would become instruments to swing the school in the direction of student success.

The HIPPY (1992) program had been equally encouraging and supportive of the need for parent involvement in education. The program had been widely hailed in Arkansas and was based on a project designed in Israel. HIPPY referred to the acronym Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters. The model was based on the idea that parents wanted the very best for children but that the parents might not always have known how to help children reach full potential. The two year program was supervised by a professional coordinator who organized group meetings, developed enrichment activities, and trained paraprofessionals. The paraprofessionals were parents and members of the community. The model emphasized the need to actively involve parents with the educational process.

Hourcade and Richardson (1987) reported that parents found games an excellent way to increase core reading skills in children while avoiding frustration usually found during homework drills. The children in the study were all diagnosed with specific learning disabilities.

The parents involved had all registered anxiety and frustration when working within the traditional academic format. The games were designed to provide a method of drill at home that would ease pressures on both the parents and students.

The teacher-made game format proved to be highly motivating. Ten boys and two girls were selected to test the game approach. The children ranged in ages from 9 years 4 months to 11 years 5 months. Reading levels measured by the Woodcock Reading Test ranged from 1.6 to 5.7. The results of the study suggested a game approach was an effective procedure to help learning disabled elementary age students master skills. A key was parent willingness to participate in such programs and parent acceptance of such activities as academically worthy.

Parents were described by math educators as the cornerstone of success for mathematical learning (Bruneau, 1988). Math teachers reported that home-based learning activities did not require extraordinary effort. Parents generating positive attitudes towards simple mathematical calculations reinforced school-based learning. Such parents served important roles in helping children generalize. The parents provided to the

learning disabled students a much needed practical application for skills learned in school (Bruneau, 1988).

Parent activity calendars were suggested as a vehicle for coordinating parent/teacher activities (Milliron, 1988). Learning logs, journals recording yearly events and accomplishments, and note writing were suggested as alternative activities to encourage writing skills. The question was posed concerning why all notes sent home must be photocopied (Milliron, 1988). Students should have been allowed to write notes home describing upcoming activities using individual creativity. Notes full of educational jargon often had negative effects on parents, while student handwritten notes had encouraged parent participation (Milliron, 1988).

The effect on learning disabled children of parental presence and absence in the classroom had been the subject of investigation by educators (Dembo & Vaughn, 1989). The mothers and forty male children in grades 3 and 4 participated in the investigation. The purpose was to determine the impact of the mothers involvement in the classrooms. The study showed that the student was positively effected by the involvement of mother in the classroom during successes and negatively effected

during failures. An interesting finding of the study was that mothers tended to alter predictions of performance based on observations of the preformance (Dembo & Vaughn, 1989). An important conclusion was that it was helpful for parents to see children succeed to maintain high expectations.

Simpson (1988) conducted a study to determine the needs of parents and families with children that had learning and behavior problems. Traditionally such information had been for the most part inferred from comparing data gathered from families and parents with related conditions. In an effort to ascertain the types of services parents of learning disabled children needed, Simpson (1988) asked fifteen teachers of learning disabled elementary students to maintain a parent contact log for three months. Entries were made each time a parent made a request or used a service. Teachers also recorded the kind of service they perceived that the parents needed. At the end of the study the logs were compared and tables were constructed. The most widely used and requested service for parents of learning disabled children was information exchange (Simpson, 1988). Parents needed more opportunities to learn and

exchange ideas about their children with professional and other parents of learning disabled children.

Akins (1987) designed a project with the objective of increasing information and support for parents and teachers of learning disabled students in a Christian School. A major component of the project was regular meetings for parents and teachers during which information was presented and opportunities for areas of concern were addressed. Meetings were well organized and focused on different aspects of specific learning disabilities.

The following seven ways to positively interact with learning disabled students were outlined:

(1) Acknowledge assets;

(2) Catch them doing something good;

(3) Have fun with them:

(4) Give doable task;

(5) Acknowledge improvement;

(6) Find positive in failure;

(7) Acknowledge contributions to family or class. (Akins, 1987)

At subsequent meetings, medical aspects and other areas of concern were discussed. Akins (1987) reported that

both teachers and parents responded positively to the meetings.

ABC News (1992) produced a special presentation that was based on a four year study of our national educational system. The schools declared successful in the presentation utilized parent involvement in the school setting. High expectations of children by parents were considered mandatory if students were to reach full potential. Parent, teacher, and student interaction and communication were deemed essential. ABC News (1992) highlighted successful schools that encouraged cooperative learning and innovative teaching styles as well as emphasized rewards for achieving personal goals. Recognition of accomplishments were reported as important to promote learning.

An informational format appeared to be a vital strategy to include in the development of a new parent support program at the school. Parents currently had no support network in operation at the rural elementary school. Providing information to parents (Simpson, 1988, Atkins, 1987) appeared to be a needed aspect that greatly contributed to the success of students in the school setting.

An informational format with regularly scheduled meetings would be incorporated into the new support program being planned for implementation in the fall. Active involvement of parents in the classroom (Hourcade and Richardson, 1987) was also deemed important and would be emphasized in the new parent support program at the rural elementary school.

CHAPTER III

Method

The Parent Support Program was implementated over a sixteen week period. Thirty-four parents of learning disabled children participated in the program. The program contained the following components: (1) monthly meetings hosted by parents of learning disabled children; (2) creative projects that involved parent and child working together for success; (3) improved communication channels among students, parents, teachers and the school. The program also emphasized parental involvement in the school setting.

Week One: (Organization)

The first week was used for organization. The parents of the learning disabled students were notified by telephone that a parent support group was starting at the elementary school this year. A calendar was developed and speakers were contacted to participate

at scheduled meetings. Materials were gathered (ie. camera, film, scrapbooks, video "F.A.T. City" Workshop, cooking apparatus) and facilities reserved for the culminating dinner.

Week Two: (Initial Informal Support Group Meeting)

The writer mailed special notification (Appendix N:68) of the first informal parent support group meeting. The meeting was held in conjunction with the elementary school's Open House. Thirty parents attended the Open House program.

Students introduced parents in attendance; and, pictures were be taken of the family unit. Students shared selected school work accomplishments Refreshments were served.

Parents were encouraged to interact with other parents through a Tell & Share session of the things appreciated most about their children. The writer presented items characterizing best attributes of the children (Appendix O:70). The functions of the resource

room were explained;and, volunteers were solicitied for hosting future home meetings. A master schedule was developed (Appendix X:88) and later mailed to the thirty-four parents participating in the program.

Weeks Three -- Five: (First Interaction Project)

The parents were notified (Appendix P:72) of an impending project that needed their assistance. The project involved a collection of historical memorabilia of the family.

Students were asked to develop a scrapbook of family historical facts involving four generations of choice. The parents were encouraged to assist the students with gathering information for the project. The picture taken at the elementary school Open House was attached to the letter of notification for inclusion in the scrapbook.

The parents and students were asked to uncover three new facts about their heritage. The historical scrapbook developed by the students and parents contained old photographs, articles of interest, geographical data, family tree and other family treasures.

Week Six: (Support Group Meeting)

Parents were notified by telephone of the next formal parent support meeting to be held at in the school library and hosted by a parent. Twenty-seven parents and eleven teachers attended. The guest speaker, a psychologist, gave a presentation on strategies for and characteristics of learning disabled children.

Volunteers to serve as discussion leaders, and, recorders at the subsequent meetings this year were solicited. The group brainstormed ideas on the expectations of what could be accomplished through support meetings. The group agreed on the following three goals: (1) To become more knowledgeable about specific learning disabilities; (2) To exchange ideas concerning strategies that encourage critical thinking skills; and, (3) To become more actively involved in the school setting.

Weeks Seven -- Nine (Home Visitations)

The writer visited the respective homes of the

parents participating in the support program. A personalized calendar was developed to assist with arranging times for volunteer efforts in the school. On an individual basis, creative scheduling was introduced to receptive parents. Assistance was rendered for flexible arranging of times.

School events were discussed including the following: Halloween Carnival, Thanksgiving Day Dinner, Talent Show, Christmas Program. Specific needs were delineated for each event and volunteers were solicited. Parents were given a calendar of school events.

Opportunities for involvement in the classrooms of learning disabled students were discussed. Parents were encouraged to adjust leisure time activities to include volunteer efforts in the school setting. A schedule was developed for the parent volunteers (Appendix X:88).

Week Ten: (Monthly Support Meeting)

Parents were notified by telephone of the monthly support group meeting to take place at the home of a parent. Twenty-three parents and four teachers attended the meeting.

Particular concerns elicited from the brainstorming sessions that were held previously were initially addressed at this meeting. Strategies for help with homework were discussed as well as behavior modification techniques.

A parent testimonial delineating some of the benefits of volunteering was given. The writer presented an informational session concerning the nature, needs, and educational programming for learning disabled children. A portion of the video entitled " F.A.T. City" was shown to the parents.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the parents discussed the project to take place during the next three weeks. The project was a dinner planned for both parents and children. Parents were invited to develope an original recipe with their children to be shared at a subsequent dinner meeting. The project involved the creating of a dish, the writing of the recipe, and the preparing of the recipe for the other members of the support group at the dinner. Awards would be given for selected dishes. Judges would be invited from outside the group by students.

Refreshments were served. Parents were encouraged

to attend school-wide functions and encouraged to volunteer in the classrooms through the creative scheduling efforts.

Weeks Eleven -- Thirteen (Creative Cooking Project)

A number of cooking activities and ideas (Appendix Q:74) were presented to the learning disabled children in the resource room. The activities served as motivators to familarize students with the skills required for the Family Cooking Project.

Students were asked to organize materials, solve measurement and logistical problems involved in preparing, transporting and serving food. Students were assisted with beginning the project of developing an original recipe. The class activities also involved purchasing the ingredients, and preparing a dish.

Week Fourteen - (Decorating project)

During this week students and parents were encouraged to make decorations to go along with the original recipes. A time, date, and place for the dinner

meeting was confirmed and notification (Appendix R:76) was mailed to the parents. In the notification parents were asked to assist students in creating decorations to enhance display of the original recipes. Parents were also informed of the need to bring the decorations and the historical scrapbooks a little before the dinner. During this week, students also made invitations to bring home to parents detailing the time, date and place of the dinner.

Week Fifteen - (Dinner Meeting)

Thirty-four parents and six teachers attended the dinner meeting. At the dinner meeting historical scrapbooks were displayed. Each family unit presented their original dish in conjunction with the decorations. Families were responsible for setting up and displaying the original recipes. Judges were the first to taste the dishes.

At the conclusion of the dinner, the judges conferred, and, awarded prizes for outstanding achievements. Copies of the recipes were provided to the group. The following catagories were judged: The Best

Recipe, Most Tasty, Most Nutritious, Best Using Local Crop. The dishes were presented and judged at the informal support group meeting.

A time for socializing was observed at the beginning of the dinner meeting. Parents were encouraged to continue volunteer efforts in the school setting. Additional concerns were solicited for future discussion. Parents were informed of the next scheduled parent support meeting.

Week Sixteen: (Final Support Group Meeting)

Thirty-four parents and two teachers attended the meeting. Refreshments were served. While the refreshments were being served, parents were asked to complete the Background Assessment (Appendix D:47) and the School Involvement Parent Questionnaire (Appendix F:52).

The writer called the meeting to order and reviewed progress and goals accomplished to date. Concerns of the group such as the use of Ritalin and what were appropriate expectations were solicited and addressed. Time was allotted for open discussion of particular

issues faced by parents of learning disabled children.

At the conclusion, parents affirmed and encouraged the formulation of future goals. The parents agreed to continue the support group meetings throughout the year.

CHAPTER IV

Results

The Parent Support Program at the rural elementary school was designed to promote involvement, foster communication, and increase attendance at school functions. Through guided assistance, parents were encouraged to spend more time with the children through involvement in creative projects emphasizing the critical thinking skills of organizing information and problem solving. The numbers of parent volunteers within the elementary school classrooms were also expected to increase.

The target group consisted of thirty-four parents of learning disabled students attending the rural elementary school. Increases in performance were measured through the administrations of the School Involvement Parent Questionnaire, the Background Assessment, and examination of school records.

The first objective was measured by administering the Background Assessment (Appendix D:47) to the target

group. Responses to questions were tabulated and totalled (Appendix S:78). An average score of 60 was computed. The results were compared to pre-implementation scores (Appendix T:80). An increase of ten percent was projected. An increase of 30 percent was measured. The first objective was achieved.

The second objective was measured by examining school records of parental attendance at school-wide functions. The number of parents of learning disabled children were tallied and a percentage was computed (Appendix U:82). The results were compared to pre-implementation records. An increase of nine percent was projected. An increase of 15 percent was measured (Appendix U:82). The second objective was achieved.

The third objective was measured by examining classroom records to determine the number of parents of learning disabled children volunteering in the classroom. The number of parent volunteers was tallied and a percentage of volunteer attendance was computed (Appendix V:84). The results were compared to pre-implementation records. An increase of nine percent was projected. An increase of 12 percent was measured (Appendix V:84). The

third objective was achieved.

The fourth objective was measured by administering the School Involvement Parent Questionnaire (Appendix F:52) to the target group. The number of responses to Question Eight was tallied and a percentage calculated of positive responses for engaging in creative projects with child involving critical thinking skills of organizing information and problem solving (Appendix W:86). The results were compared to pre-implementation results. An eleven percent increase was projected. An increase of 25 percent was measured (Appendix W:86). The fourth objective was achieved.

CHAPTER V

Recommendations

Thirty-four parents of learning disabled children participated in the Parent Support Program. The results were summarized and reported to the building administrator. Important results included the following:

(1) The parents participating in the support program increased average scores by 30 percent on the writer-created Background Assessment. The increase in scores indicated an expanded knowledge base of the legal aspects, nature, needs, and characteristics of learning disabilities.

(2) The parents of learning disabled children increased by 15 percent attendance at school-wide functions thus demonstrating an improved rate of involvement in school activities such as Open House,

School Carnivals, and Holiday Programs.

(3) The parents increased the rate of volunteering in the classrooms of learning disabled students by 12 percent.

(4) The parents participating in the Support Program increased average scores by 25 percent on Question Eight of the School Involvement Parent Questionnaire. The responses indicated participation of parents in critical thinking skills and problem-solving projects. The increase in positive responses demonstrated engaging in creative projects that fostered communication among students, parents, and the school.

The Parent Support Program was implemented over a sixteen-week period. The program provided a support network primarily to parents of learning disabled students attending the rural elementary school. The Support Program provided essential information about learning disabilities to the parents and increased parental involvement within the school setting.

A workshop describing effective strategies was presented to the teachers of the learning disabled students at a faculty meeting. The following strategies were highlighted: (1) monthly meetings hosted by parents, (2) creative projects that involved parents, students and teachers working together for success, (3) parental involvement within the school, and (4) open channels of communication among parents, teachers, students, and the school. The strategy deemed essential to the success of the Support Program was the "active" involvement and participation of the parents.

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APPENDIX A

Telephone Poll of Parents of Learning Disabled Students

APPENDIX A

Telephone Poll Of
Parents of Learning Disabled Students

1. Do you want the Specific Learning Disabilities Program at the elementary school to continue? Yes ____ No ____

Comments:

2. Do You want more information about the field of specific learning disabilities? Yes____ No ____

Comments:

3. Would you participate in a parent support group for parents of children with specific learning disabilities? Yes ____ No ____

Comments:

APPENDIX B

Tabulation of Telephone Poll
Teachers and Parents of Students in SLD Program
Fall 1992

Tabulation of Telephone Poll of Teachers and Parents of Students in SLD Program Fall 1992

	Positive Response			
Parent	Q #1	Q #2	Q #3	Score
1	10	10	10	30
2	10	10	10	30
3	10	10	10	30
4	10	10	10	30
5	10	10	10	30
6	10	10	10	30
7	10	10	10	30
8	10	10	10	30
9	10	10	10	30
10	10	10	10	30
11	10	10	10	30
12	10	10	10	30
13	10	10	10	30
14	10	10	10	30
15	10	10	10	30
16	10	10	10	30
17	10	10	10	30
18	10	10	10	30
19	10	10	10	30
20	10	10	10	30
21	10	10	10	30
22	10	10	10	30
23	10	10	10	30
24	10	10	10	30
25	10	10	10	30
26	10	10	10	30
27	10	10	10	30
28	10	10	10	30
29	10	10	10	30
30	10	10	10	30
31	10	10	10	30
32	10	10	10	30
33	10	10	10	30
34	10	10	10	30
Teachers				
1	10	10	10	30
2	10	10	10	30
3	10	10	10	30
4	10	10	10	30
5	10	10	10	30
6	10	10	10	30
7	10	10	10	30
8	10	10	10	30
9	10	10	10	30
Average Score				30

APPENDIX C

Telephone Poll Comments

Appendix C

Telephone Poll Comments

The Specific Learning Disabilities program has been wonderful. I would like to know more about it though. I would like it if we could form a parent's group.

I wish I knew more about learning disabilities. I am embarassed I know such a little.

I deal with this all day long at school but some how its differant when its your own child. What we need is a parent support group. I would certainly come.

My son is so much happier in school. I'd like to know more about learning styles and what his Dad and I could do to help.

This is the first year we haven't all gone to bed crying. It's like I am beginning to understand. I'd like it if we had some kind of group. Couldn't you help us form one.

It would be nice to be able to talk to other parents who understand. My sister's kids are so differant from mine. It's hard to talk with her about this.

I wish I really understood. Yes, I would come to a group meeting.

My husband and I want to do more. We just don't know what to do.

I get so frustrated. Sometimes I think I'm the worest one for him. I was just like him when I was his age.

I know he (son) is O.K. I just hate everything is so hard for him. You know his sister who is four years younger than him reads to him? Is that alright?

I know he is smart. You should see the things he does at the farm.

I really wish I understood more.

It seems like all we do is fuss at him. I hate it. (tears). If all this would only work. The program is helping. He is a good boy.

This has been such a relief to me. Yes I would come.

APPENDIX D

Background Assessment

APPENDIX D

Background Assessment

1. What does it mean to have a specific learning disability?

2. What are the characteristics of a child with a specific learning disability?

3. What did Public Law 94-142 do for students with learning disabilities?

4. How can medical specialist assist students with specific learning disabilities?

5. What are some ways the family can support a learning disabled child?

6. How should a diagnosis of a specific learning disability be made?

7. Who should make a diagnosis of a specific learning disability?

8. What are some techniques for building the self-concept of children with a specific learning disability?

9. What are the most prevalent types of learning disabilities?

10. What are some characteristics of adults with specific learning disabilities?

APPENDIX E

Results of Background Assessment
Fall 1992

APPENDIX E

Results of Background Assessment Fall 1992

Satisfactory Response

Parent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Score
1	10			10	10		10	10			50
2	10				10			10		10	40
3	10							10			20
4	10							10			20
5	10			10				10			30
6		10		10				10			30
7	10			10				10		10	40
8	10	10		10				10	10	10	60
9		10		10					10		30
10	10			10					10		30
11	10			10							20
12	10			10				10			30
13				10							10
14	10										10
15	10			10				10	10		40
16				10							10
17		10									10
18	10			10				10			30
19	10			10				10			30
20	10	10		10				10			40
21	10		10	10				10			40
22	10	10						10			30
23	10	10		10	10	10		10			60
24		10		10							20
25	10	10						10			30
26	10	10		10			10	10			50
27	10	10			10		10	10			50
28		10		10							20
29		10					10		10		30
30	10										10
31		10									10
32	10			10			10	10	10		50
33	10			10			10				30
34		10					10				20
Total Score											1030
Average Score											30

APPENDIX F

School Involvement Parent Questionnaire

APPENDIX F

School Involvement Parent Questionnaire

The data collected on this questionnaire concerns the time from August of 1992 until December of 1992.

I am a Mother ____ Father ____.

1. Do you enjoy school functions? ____Yes ____No
2. Place a check by the school wide functions you attended last Fall.
   - ____First day of school
   - ____Open House
   - ____Thanksgiving Program
   - ____Talent Show
   - ____Halloween Carnival
   - ____Christmas Program
3. Do you attend functions such as class parties or Teacher conferences regularly? Yes ___ No___
4. Besides homework, how much time do you spend alone with your child a week?
   ____ 1 hour or less ____ 2 to 5 hours
   ____ more than 5 hours ____Yes ____No
5. Do you ever work as a volunteer in your child's classroom? ____ Yes ____ No
6. Which of these activities do you enjoy doing together with your child the most?
   ____ Athletics ____ T.V. ____ Academics ____ Games
   ____ Other Activities (Specify)_____
7. Can your child perform a skill you have taught him/her?
   ____No ____Yes What skill_____
8. Do you engage in creative projects with your child?
   ____No ____Yes What type? _____

APPENDIX G

Results of Question Two
Attendance at School Functions
School Involvement Parent Questionnaire
Fall 1992

APPENDIX G

Results of Question Two Attendance at School Functions
School Involvement Parent Questionnaire
Fall 1992

Parents of Elementary School Children

Program	Mothers	Fathers	Total Parents	Percent of Parents
First Day of School	70	8	78	61
Open House	46	44	90	70
Thanksgiving	29	3	32	25
Talent Show	16	4	20	16
Halloween	68	51	119	92
Christmas Program	63	54	117	95
Totals	292	169	461	60

128 respondents
54 fathers
74 mothers

Parents of Learning Disabled Students

Program	Mothers	Fathers	Total Parents	Percent of Parents
First Day of School	17	0	17	50
Open House	17	2	19	55
Thanksgiving	10	0	10	29
Talent Show	2	0	2	5
Halloween	16	10	26	76
Christmas Program	17	15	32	85
Totals	79	27	106	51

*34 Respondents
17 Fathers
17 Mothers

APPENDIX H

Comparison of Results of Question Two of the
School Involvement Parent Questionnaire
Fall 1992

APPENDIX H

Comparison of Results of Question Two of the School Involvement Parent Questionnaire Fall 1992

Items	Parents of Elementary Students	Parents of Learning Disabled Students
Number of Mothers	292	79
Number of Fathers	169	27
Total	461	106
Percent Attended	60	51

Percent of Discrepancy 9

128 parents in elementary school
34 parents of learning disabled students

APPENDIX I

Results of Question Five Parent Volunteers
School Involvement Parent Questionnaire
Fall 1992

APPENDIX I

Results of Question Five Parent Volunteers
School Involvement Parent Questionaire
Fall 1992

Parents of Elementary School Children

Voluntered in Classroom	Mothers	Fathers	Total Parents	Percent of Parents
Yes	14	2	16	12
No	60	52	112	88

*128 Respondents
54 Fathers
74 Mothers

Parents of Learning Disabled Students

Voluntered in Classroom	Mothers	Fathers	Total Parents	Percent of Parents
Yes	1	0	1	3
No	16	17	33	87

*34 Respondents
17 Fathers
17 Mothers

Percent of Discrepancy 9

APPENDIX J

Results of Question Eight Creative Projects
School Involvement Parent Questionnaire
Fall 1992

APPENDIX J

Results of Question Eight Creative Projects
School Involvement Parent Questionnaire
Fall 1992

Parents of Elementary School Children

Creative Projects	Mothers	Fathers	Total Parents	Percent of Parents
Yes	54	12	66	52
No	20	42	62	48

Type		
	cooking	128 Respondents
	crafts	54 Fathers
	woodwork	74 mothers

Parents of Learning Disabled Students

Creative Projects	Mothers	Fathers	Total Parents	Percent of Parents
Yes	11	3	14	41
No	6	14	20	59

Type		
	Crafts	34 Respondents
	Weaving	17 Fathers
		17 Mothers

APPENDIX K

Comparison of Results Question Eight Creative Projects
Of the School Involvement Parent Questionnaire
Fall 1992

APPENDIX K

Comparison of Results Question Eight Creative Projects Of the School Involvement Parent Questionnaire Fall 1992

Creative project with child	Number of Parents Elem. Students	Percent of Parents Elem. Students	Number of Parents of LD Students	Percent of Parents of LD Students
Mothers	54	73	11	65
Fathers	12	22	3	18
Total Parents	66	52	14	41

Percent of Discrepancy 11

*Figures based on
128 parents of elementary school students
34 parents of learning disabled students

APPENDIX L

Letter of Support

Glades Day School

400 N. E. Avenue L
Belle Glade, Florida 33430

407-996-6769

James M. Herring, Jr.
Chairman
Board of Trustees

Edward J. Sizemore, Jr.
Headmaster

Appendix L

August 10, 1993

Dear Sir:

Mrs. Charlda Sizemore is a specific learning disabilities teacher at the rural elementary school where I am the principal. The school began a specific learning disabilities program in the fall of 1992. A resource room was established and students identified by independent evaluation attend the resource room each day. The program has been successful.

In determining our objectives for our new program, the administrative staff concurred that parent education and involvement in the new program would become our primary objective for the upcoming year. Mrs. Sizemore's practicum, implementing a parent support program, will reach this objective and be an excellent addition to our specific learning disabilities program.

I am giving Mrs. Sizemore my complete support and cooperation. This practicum project will fill a need that has been identified and targeted by the school administration.

Sincerely,

Karen McDermott

Karen McDermott
Elementary Principal

Accredited by The Florida Council of Independent Schools

APPENDIX M

Target Group Summary

APPENDIX M

Target Group Summary

Parent	Background Assessment Score	Question Two	Question Eight	Project Type	Occupation	Mother/ Father
1	50	4	yes	crafts	Teacher	Mother
2	40	5	yes	weaving	Businessman	Father
3	20	5	no		Aggriculture	Father
4	20	0	no		Aggriculture	Mother
5	30	6	no		Aggriculture	Father
6	30	5	no		Aggriculture	Mother
7	40	2	no		Aggriculture	Father
8	60	5	yes	crafts	Teacher	Mother
9	30	2	no		Aggriculture	Father
10	30	5	no		Aggriculture	Mother
11	20	1	no		Aggriculture	Father
12	30	5	yes			Mother
13	10	1	no			Mother
14	10	2	no		Businessman	Father
15	40	2	no		Teacher	Mother
16	10	3	yes	crafts	Aggriculture	Father
17	10	2	no		Aggriculture	Mother
18	30	0	yes		Aggriculture	Father
19	30	0	no		Aggriculture	Mother
20	40	4	yes		Aggriculture	Father
21	40	0	yes		Aggriculture	Mother
22	30	4	yes		Aggriculture	Father
23	60	6	yes	weaving		Mother
24	20	0	no			Father
25	30	1	no			Mother
26	50	5	yes		Aggriculture	Father
27	50	1	yes		Aggriculture	Mother
28	20	4	no		Aggriculture	Father
29	30	1	no		Aggriculture	Mother
30	10	2	yes		Aggriculture	Father
31	10	4	yes	crafts		Mother
32	50	4	no			Father
33	30	1	no			Mother
34	20	3	no			Father

APPENDIX N

Special Notification for Open House

APPENDIX N

Special Notification For Open House

COME
COME
COME
COME
COME
COME
TO
TO
TO
TO
TO
THE
RESOURCE ROOM

Thursday

SETEMBER 25,1993

OPEN HOUSE 7:00 until 9:00 p.m.

Parents & Students

APPENDIX O

Items Characterizing Best Attributes

APPENDIX O

Items Characterizing Best Attributes

Student	
1	Smiling Face
2 & 16, 14	Busy Bee
3 & 12	Handsome Harry Doll
13	Sumshine
5	Laughing Mirror
6	Football
7 & 10	Baseball
8	Tennis Racquet
9 & 11	Bird
17	Flower
15	Lion

APPENDIX P

Historical Memorabilia Notification

APPENDIX P

Historical Memorabilia Notification

WANTED
Information About This Important Family
The _____Family

Making a Historical Scrapbook
Will be The Resource Room Fall Project

(Place picture here)

Rewards
Will Be Awarded for the Best Scrapbook

Scrapbooks can contain information of any kind about three generations of choice of those you consider your family. You will be asked to discover three facts you did not know about members of you family. This is a family project and the reward will be for the whole family.

Due date is December _, 1993
Scrapbooks will be displayed at a dinner.

APPENDIX Q

Resource Room Cooking Activities

APPENDIX Q

Resource Room Cooking Activities

1. Students will make edible clay out of peanut butter, powered milk and sugar. The three will be mixed to the correct consistence for clay. This activity requires estimating but does not require measuring. Students will be allowed to shape the "clay" into objects and take the objects home.

2. Cookies will be made using a simple sugar cookie recipe. Students will read from the written recipe, and measure and mix the ingredience using appropriate measuring devices. The cookies will be made one day, refrigerated and baken on the following day. Students will be allowed to select cookie cutters available or bring cookie cutters fron home. Students will be encouraged to use the dough wisely by determining the correct placement of the cookie cutter. Students will be allowed to eat their cookies or take them home.

3. A simple recipe for brownies will be doubled before it is made. Students will use math skills to calculate the changes needed to make a double batch of brownies when the recipe is written for a single batch. All ingrediences will be a available. The brownies will be cooked and evaluated as they are eaten.

4. Students will be asked to find a recipe they think looks good in a magazine and bring it to class.

5. Measurement abbreviations will be made into a chart with pictures.

6. The story "Frekle Juice" will be read.

7. Students will visit the school cafeteria kitchen and have a tour of the way food at the school is prepared.

8. The story "The doughnut Machine" will be read and doughnuts will be served.

APPENDIX R

Notification of Dinner Meeting

APPENDIX R

Notification of Dinner Meeting

Parents and Students of the Resource Room

Dinner Meeting

Date _____

Time _____

Place _____

Bring twelve servings of an original recipe created by

your family.
Prizes will be awarded.

Please assist students with decorations to highlight the original recipe.

Bring your Family Scrapbook and decorations at 6:30.

Don't forget copies of your "original recipe" for all your friends.

Come with a big appetite.

APPENDIX S

Results of
Background Assessment
Fall 1993

APPENDIX S

Results of Background Assessment Fall 1993

Satisfactory Response

Parent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Score
1	10	10	10	10	10		10	10			70
2	10	10	10	10	10			10		10	70
3	10	10		10	10			10			50
4	10				10			10			30
5	10	10		10	10	10	10	10	10		80
6		10	10	10	10			10			50
7	10		10	10	10			10	10	10	70
8	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	100
9	10	10		10	10				10		50
10	10	10	10	10			10	10	10		70
11	10	10		10			10	10			50
12	10	10	10	10			10	10			60
13	10	10	10	10							40
14	10	10					10	10			40
15	10		10	10	10	10	10	10	10		80
16	10	10		10							30
17	10	10				10		10			40
18	10		10	10				10	10		50
19	10	10		10			10	10	10		60
20	10	10	10	10		10	10	10	10		80
21	10	10	10	10				10			50
22	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10			80
23	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10			80
24	10	10		10				10	10		50
25	10	10						10			30
26	10	10	10	10			10	10	10		70
27	10	10	10	10	10		10	10	10	10	90
28		10		10				10	10	10	50
29		10		10	10	10	10		10		60
30	10	10	10				10				40
31	10	10		10	10						40
32	10	10	10	10	10		10	10	10	10	90
33	10	10		10		10	10				50
34	10	10		10	10		10	10	10	10	80
Total Score											2030
Average Score											60

APPENDIX T

Comparison of Results of Background Assessment Between Fall 1992 and Fall 1993

APPENDIX T

Comparison of Results of Background Assessment Between Fall 1992 and Fall 1993

	1992	1993	Percent of Increase
Parent	Score	Score	
1	50	70	20
2	40	70	30
3	20	50	30
4	20	30	10
5	30	80	50
6	30	50	20
7	40	70	30
8	60	100	40
9	30	50	20
10	30	70	40
11	20	50	30
12	30	60	30
13	10	40	30
14	10	40	30
15	40	80	40
16	10	30	20
17	10	40	30
18	30	50	20
19	30	60	30
20	40	80	40
21	40	50	10
22	30	80	50
23	60	80	20
24	20	50	30
25	30	30	0
26	50	70	20
27	50	90	40
28	20	50	30
29	30	60	30
30	10	40	30
31	10	40	30
32	50	90	40
33	30	50	20
34	20	80	60
Total Score	1030	2030	1000
Average Score	30	60	30

Percent of increase 30

APPENDIX U

School Records of Attendance of Parents
of Learning Disabled Students at School Events
Fall 1992 and Fall 1993

APPENDIX U

School Records of Attendance of Parents of Learning Disabled Students at School Events Fall 1992 and Fall 1993

Fall 1992

Program	Mothers	Fathers	Total Parents	Percent of Parents
First Day of School	17	0	17	50
Open House	17	2	19	55
Thanksgiving	10	0	10	29
Talent Show	2	0	2	5
Halloween	16	10	26	76
Christmas Program	17	15	32	85
Totals	79	27	106	51

Fall 1993

Program	Mothers	Fathers	Total Parents	Percent of Parents
First Day of School	17	6	23	68
Open House	17	7	24	70
Thanksgiving	13	2	15	44
Talent Show	4	2	6	18
Halloween	17	16	33	97
Christmas Program	17	17	34	100
Totals	79	27	135	66

Percent of increase 15

APPENDIX V

Classroom Records of Parent Volunteers
Fall 1992 and Fall 1993

APPENDIX V

Classroom Records of Parent Volunteers
Fall 1992 & Fall 1993

Fall 1992

Voluntered in Classroom	Mothers	Fathers	Total Parents	Percent of Parents
Yes	1	0	1	3
No	16	17	33	87

Fall 1993

Voluntered in Classroom	Mothers	Fathers	Total Parents	Percent of Parents
Yes	5	0	5	15
No	12	17	29	85

Percent of Increase 12

APPENDIX W

Results of Question Eight Creative Projects
School Involvement Parent Questionnaire
Fall 1992 and Fall 1993

APPENDIX W

Results of Question Eight Creative Projects School Involvement Parent Questionnaire Fall 1992 & Fall 1993

Fall 1992

Creative Projects	Mothers	Fathers	Total Parents	Percent of Parents
Yes	11	3	14	41
No	6	14	20	59

Fall 1993

Creative Projects	Mothers	Fathers	Total Parents	Percent of Parents
Yes	17	5	22	66
No	0	12	12	44

Percent of Increase 25

APPENDIX X

Calendar of Parent Support Group Meetings
Schedule for Parent Volunteers

APPENDIX X

Calendar of Parent Support Group Meetings Fall 1992

	Date	Time	Place	Program
September	12	7:00 pm	School	SLD
October	14	8:00 pm	Home	Guest Speaker
November	18	8:00 pm	Home	Strategies
December	9	8:00 pm	Home	Dinner

Schedule for Parent Volunteers

	Date	Time	Place	Parent Name
September	19	9:00 am	SLD Room	12
	24	2:30 pm	SLD Room	31
October	8	1:00 pm	SLD Room	23
	12	12:00 pm	SLD Room	29
November	10	2:30 pm	SLD Room	12
	23	9:00 pm	SLD Room	31
December	2	2:30 pm	SLD Room	21